

Public Experience, Attitudes, & Knowledge Toward Forest Fire, Risk, & Recovery

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Objectives

Explore Public's

- Experience with forest fire
- Knowledge of fire & fire ecology
- Attitudes -Fire Management
- Attitudes - Fire risk
- Fire prevention behavior

Assess Explanatory Factors

- Gender, Race, Age
- Income, Education, Employment
- Region, Immigration
- Where-raised, Where-living

Methods

Data

- National telephone survey (NSRE)
- Approx 40 questions
- Two treatments @ 3000
 - Fall 2002 – Spring 2003
 - Fall 2003 – Spring 2004

Analysis

- Frequencies (post sample wts)
- Logistic regression
 - Binary, Multinomial, Ordered
- Poisson knowledge score model
- Excel probability spreadsheets

Results (n=6900+)

Experience Yes(%)

- Seen, heard, read 12 mo 81
- Diff wild vs prescribed 83
- Ever witness forest fire 35
- Seen forest post burn 66
- Smoke affected travel 35
- Fire altered rec plans 17

Risk Very Likely (%)

- Fire w/i 10 mi home 23

Concerned (%)

- Home damaged (fire) 9
- Smoke prescribed fire 33
- Wildlife prescribed fire 46
- Scenery prescribed fire 37

Risk Avoidance (n=3000+) Yes(%)

- Clear vegetation from buildings 35
- Spray herbicide control undergrowth 12
- Extra property insurance 36
- Keep firefighting equip 30
- Routinely burn under-growth around home 7

Knowledge True(%)

- Most wildfires natural 39
- Wildfire destructive long-term forest health 52
- Wildfire a leading environmental problem 44
- Prescribed & wildfire similar effects 43
- Prescribed fire kills too many large trees 25

Knowledge True(%)

- Prescribed regularly out of control 21
- Prescribed fire reduces wildfire risk 79
- Fire increases chances insect or disease o-b's 22
- Fire useful to control undesirable weeds 66
- Many plants require fire in life cycle 57

Attitudes Agree (%)

- Natural recovery 57
- Put out all wildfires 49
- Allow remote burns if humans unthreatened 39
- Post fire timber salvage makes sense 81
- People choosing to live near forests accept risks 78
- Homeowners should follow gov't guidelines to manage for wildfire risk 71
- Public land managers ...
 - Trusted to select best methods for wildfire 68
 - Use mechanical ground veg removal 58
 - Use chemical treatments 27
 - Use prescribed fire 92

Attitudes Concerned (%)

- Public land managers' ability to manage fire in forests & rangeland 33
- Gov't not consider tax-payer costs... 50
- Gov't not consider long-term ecosystem health ... 65

Some Implications

Experience

- 15% - Simply not tuned in

Attitudes

- Buyer beware
- Timber salvage

Attitudes

- Anti-chemical
- Prescribed fire wins
- Ecosystem health
- Pro's generally trusted ...